

comprehensive effort, one in six residents of the Mount Hope neighborhood lives in a building operated by the MHHC.

Since its founding, the MHHC has continued to enhance its abilities and expand its services to the community. In 1994, the MHHC opened a thrift shop. One year later, the Mount Hope Primary Care Center opened. And in 1996, the New Bronx Employment Service was inaugurated, followed by the Neighborhood Housing Service/MHHC Home Maintenance Training Center in 1998. And now MHHC is planning to develop a community center that will house programs for area youth like a Boys and Girls Club, affordable child care and a state of the art center for computer training.

Mr. Speaker, the Mount Hope Housing Company, Inc. is another fine example of a community organization dedicated to empowering Bronx residents and revitalizing the community, using a comprehensive, self-sustaining and long-term approach. Its success reminds all of us of the contributions local organizations have made to improving the lives of citizens in their respective communities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to the Mount Hope Housing Company, Inc. and in wishing them continued success.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY OF DAVID HOFFMAN

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 28, 2001

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to request that the testimony given by David Hoffman, President of Internews in Arcata, CA, be submitted into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Mr. Hoffman's valuable testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations is as follows:

TESTIMONY TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING, AND RE- LATED PROGRAMS BY DAVID HOFFMAN, PRESIDENT, INTERNEWS

Electronic media are the most powerful force for social change in the world today. As Americans, we live and breathe in the information age. Media are central to our economy, our culture, our political system and our everyday lives.

But in many countries around the world, free media can by no means be taken for granted. In Russia, President Putin has prosecuted Victor Gusinsky, whose influential television network has been critical of the government. In Ukraine, Prime Minister Kuchma has been accused of ordering the murder of a dissident journalist. In China, the government selectively censors Internet web sites that challenge the official version of events. In Iran, dozens of newspapers have been banned and their editors thrown in jail. In Zimbabwe, journalists have been beaten and jailed. In Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, independent television stations have been suppressed.

And of course, former President Milosevic used state media as a propaganda weapon to foment hatred and violence in the Balkans. But with US government funds, Internews and other NGOs were able to provide critical support to independent broadcasters in Serbia that formed the nucleus of opposition to the Milosevic regime. In Serbia and many

countries around the world, independent media have been on the front lines in the fight for freedom and democracy.

With significant funding from USAID, Internews helped developed 1500 independent, non-governmental broadcasters in 23 countries. During the past ten years, we have also trained 16,000 media professionals.

IMPORTANCE OF OPEN MEDIA

In all these countries we have learned that open media are essential for holding free and fair elections, for exposing corruption and human rights abuses, for allowing the free exchange of ideas. American support of uncensored news outlets, therefore, should be at the top of our foreign policy agenda.

America's goal should be the development of a global "electronic commons" where everyone can participate in the global marketplace of goods and ideas, where everyone has access to multiple sources of information, where government regulation of the media is kept to a minimum, where the poor, minorities, women and every group that has been disenfranchised in the past will have a voice.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

This Committee and this Congress can be proud of their support for open media in the former Soviet Union, in the Balkans and most recently in Indonesia. But there are large areas of the world where open media have yet to take hold. In Africa, in particular, independent media are just in their infancy. We encourage the Committee to continue and expand its support of open media in developing countries.

We would like to share the key lessons that Internews has learned in our nearly twenty years of experience in the field of international media, and make one recommendation for the Committee to consider this year.

First, local indigenous media are the best counterweight to repressive regimes everywhere. They should be supported as an integral part of American foreign policy.

Second, support for local broadcast media is the most effective means for building open, civil societies and healthy market economies in line with democratic ideals. This support needs to be sustained for the long run until stable economies and civil societies are in place.

And third, in the developing world, locally-produced radio programs and other media coverage are unparalleled in their potential to effectively educate mass populations about urgent social problems such as HIV/AIDS.

We would urge the committee to give special attention to this last point.

ROLE OF MEDIA IN COMBATTING HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA

At a time when the incidence of HIV/AIDS has reached catastrophic proportions in Africa, there is an important opportunity to harness the power of local media to reduce the spread of this disease. Over 17 million Africans have died of AIDS since the epidemic began in the late 1970s. In at least eight sub-Saharan African nations, infection levels in the general population are 15% or higher.

Yet local news coverage of this epidemic is often seriously flawed. African journalists do not usually specialize in one particular area, so their knowledge of the issue may be shallow and the language they use may inadvertently further stigmatize victims of HIV/AIDS. As a recent Time magazine cover story concluded, "Ignorance is the crucial reason the epidemic has run out of control."

By training local African journalists in how to cover this issue effectively and responsibly, as Internews has done in Russia and Ukraine, we can reduce the ignorance

and fear that exacerbate the suffering. One of the biggest challenges of the AIDS pandemic is in reaching young audiences with needed information before they become sexually active. By focusing a media campaign on pre-pubescent African children, we can begin to get ahead of the spread of this deadly virus.

Internews therefore requests that this Committee recommend funding in the amount of \$2 million for Internews to implement a media training program to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

As elected officials; you know better than most the unequalled power of the media to inform and motivate the public. In Africa and the developing world, nothing is more effective than hearing local people on the radio speaking in their local dialect. If we can educate those voices about the true nature of the HIV virus, we can begin to change the attitudes and practices that have allowed this disease to run out of control.

WOMEN AND MEDIA IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

Women in the developing world have a special role to play in changing public health practices and on a wide range of social issues.

In his book *Development As Freedom*, Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen illustrates how increased literacy, education, job opportunities, property rights and political representation for women directly translate into reduced infant mortality rates, lower birth rates, cleaner water, reduced crime and overall national economic growth.

If we want to see the less developed countries emerge from the morass of poverty, disease and chronic warfare, there is nothing more important we can do than increase the political and social influence of women. One way to increase the influence of women in the developing world is to open up opportunities for women in the media.

Let us train a new generation of women journalists, producers and media entrepreneurs in Africa. Let us develop the capacity of women's NGOs to utilize the media to deliver their messages. Let us help start new radio programs that address the needs of women. For example, with a grant from USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, Internews helped develop the first radio program in Indonesia specifically targeted to a female audience. This type of assistance delivered throughout Africa would have the power to transform the continent. A democratic, open media in Africa is both a moral and a political imperative.

ABOUT INTERNEWS

Internews® is an international non-profit organization that supports open media worldwide. The company fosters independent media in emerging democracies, produces innovative television and radio programming and Internet content, and uses the media to reduce conflict within and between countries.

Internews programs are based on the conviction that vigorous and diverse mass media form an essential cornerstone of a free and open society. Internews projects currently span the former Soviet Union, Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa and the United States.

Formed in 1982, Internews Network, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in California, with offices in 23 countries worldwide. The organization currently has offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Kosovo, France, Belgium, Israel/Palestine, Indonesia, East Timor, Thailand,